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Norfolk District

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Disadvantaged areas get a big boost

NORFOLK, VA. – The Norfolk District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has awarded the largest construction contract in the nation under the Small Business Administration's HUBZone Program.

The Arriba Corporation, Norfolk, Virginia, got the award, a \$4.3 million contract to build a consolidated learning center at Fort Eustis, Virginia.

The Ft. Eustis, Virginia, learning center will provide a centrally located educational facility for soldiers that not only includes classrooms and a library but also testing facilities, computer and study areas and break rooms.

HUBZone is an acronym for historically underutilized business zones. A Congressionally mandated program signed into law in 1977, the HUBZone program awards contracts to areas of the country that are experiencing high unemployment and low economic development. To qualify as a HUBZone, the area must be designated as such by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Contractors such as Arriba must meet four basic criteria to compete for HUBZone contracts. They must be a small business as defined by the SBA. The owner must be a U.S. citizen. The company's main office must be in a HUBZone. Finally, at least 35 percent of the company's employees must reside in a HUBZone.

With the award, Arriba plans to recruit workers in Lackey, Virginia, the HUBZone nearest Fort Eustis, to hire workers to augment its 12 to 14-member workforce. According to

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Robert Charles Bostic, vice president of Arriba, “Our construction supervisor is going to make a visit and put out a flier to hire extra employees” with certain trade skills needed to build the learning center.

Stated Bostic, “I think it is a great program because it puts the work in the areas and for the people who need it.”

According to Jack Beecher, Norfolk District’s deputy for small business, “I have been to Arriba’s office located in the HUBZone in Norfolk. Arriba moved into a dilapidated building and renovated it. That encourages other companies to do the same thing.”

“You can physically see the undeveloped portions of that area of Norfolk,” Beecher continued. “It gives you a real understanding of what these dollars are going to mean to that area. Those people working for Arriba and living either in Norfolk or in other HUBZone areas are most likely going to take back what they earn and spend it in their neighborhoods, and that’s also going to benefit their community. I really feel that in a small way, Norfolk District is helping those people and areas who need it most.”